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PROGRAM Tris Coffin

STATION WWDC Radio

DATE March 4, 1964 7:03-7:20 P.M.

CITY Washington, D. C.

REP. LINDSAY INTERVIEWED ON CIA

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TRIS COFFIN: "The most controversial agency of the American government is the CIA, or Central Intelligence Agency. By its very nature it has an aura of mystery and cloak-and-dagger about it, and this means that the press takes delight in covering a piece of its boot from time to time. Whatever its accomplishments are, are secret, but its errors have been widely publicized - the U-2 flight while President Eisenhower was meeting Khrushchev, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and a rather hilarious tale of the opium army the CIA was supporting in Burma.

"Overseas the CIA is widely not too favorably known. It has become the favorite target of those with a little or a lot of anti-American spleen. There are rumblings in Congress - the need to improve the image, as we say. A serious proposal has been made by Representative John V. Lindsay, Republican of New York. The thoughts of Congressman Lindsay are worth listening to, not only because he is an intelligent and serious law maker, but because he is one of the most attractive, he may well wind up as a leading figure in the American political scene. A good many people feel that the CIA is airing what seems to be a banker for publicity, so I asked Congressman Lindsay if he did not think the CIA was indiscreet. He replied:

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: "I don't think 'indiscreet' is the right word. It's too complicated and too big a question for that word 'indiscreet.' The problem with the CIA is it's become formalized in the governmental establishment. The symbol is this great big, huge, new building in Virginia, with swirling highways pointing to it, and also the extent to which the CIA is involved in operations around the world. And that puts it in a very delicate position. But it means that foreign policy is sometimes being developed as you go along, by the nature of operations and, that being the case, it's time to take a look."

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TRIS COFFIN: "Congressman, you're a serious critic of the CIA. How do you think this operations and policy might be separated?"

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: "Maybe you can't separate it. It may be impossible to draw fixed lines on the development of foreign policy and its conduct, and the tie-in with operations. I don't know, but I do think it has to be examined, and to date it hasn't been examined except by the insiders. An outside group must do this and, by all logic, it ought to be the United States Congress. That's why I recommend that there be a joint committee between the Senate and House, a high level joint committee exactly the same as the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. If this is done, why then it seems to me that we can take a real hard look at the relationship between the State Department and the CIA, (WORD UNINTELLIGIBLE) policies, and take also a look at intelligence evaluation - all of which, I think, ought to be done. And I don't know why (WORDS UNINTELLIGIBLE) CIA immeasurably."

TRIS COFFIN: "Do you think if the committee were established, the Congress would itself become interfering in the intelligence operations?"

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: "That hasn't been the case in the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy which has had, in times past, just as delicate a problem to cope with as has this one. Bear in mind, also, that you now have four sub-committees of the Congress that, in theory, are supposed to be totally briefed and totally aware, and have the right to ask questions. And, as I understand the position of the governmental establishment, they'd like to keep this exactly the way it is. In other words, they claim that there is some virtue in having it downgraded, and also scattered about. I argue that it's just the contrary - that there's a great deal of virtue in having it upgraded, higher status, better men who are members of a joint committee, and take it a lot more seriously than they do at the moment."

TRIS COFFIN: "Harry Truman said the other day that actually reminded people that the CIA was originally set up as a small coordinating agency with, perhaps, a very minor part in actual operations."

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: "Well, that was true at the beginning, but now, you see, the CIA has achieved a preeminent position in the whole intelligence community in Washington. It's the biggest and the first, and the dominant one, and increasingly become the dominant one. Curiously enough, all of the coordinating machinery revolves around it and points to it, and now it's become clear that the Central Intelligence Agency is the umpire and judge. So, something, I think, should be done to examine this. I think you have to remember, too,

"that the President has to have complete power, control and authority here. It's argued that he does. In fact, CIA says that they report only to the President and don't, necessarily, have to report to the Congress. That's not correct, really. The only reason that the President keeps political control over the pentagon is because he's got a whole series of layers of political appointees that he appoints, and they're responsible to him. The CIA has all career people, except for the Director himself. All the more reason, it seems to me, why there has to be a check."

TRIS COFFIN: "Do you think it's proper for CIA to issue press releases or hold press conferences?"

CONGRESSMAN LINDSAY: "Well, again, the CIA, I would imagine, got so sensitive over the criticism that was cropping up, and it's in no position to protect itself. Who's there to protect the CIA? It has no constituency, so it's been trying to strengthen its image. You can hardly blame them. But I don't think they ought to be doing it. A committee of this kind is in a position to do it, and if the establishment in government would agree to this, why I think it could be a help to the CIA in protecting it from time to time. I'd like to point out that, insofar as I know, no official of the CIA has taken a position in opposition to the bill that I've suggested, as a formal matter. I think it remains to be seen whether or not the executive branch - the President - will endorse it or oppose it. I think President Kennedy's position was in opposition. He was asked, at a press conference, about it a year ago, and he was in opposition but, I recall, in 1956 when the matter came to a vote in the Senate, he voted for it."

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